

3rd Day.]

DECLARATION OF LONDON.

[1 June, 1911.]

Sir WILFRID LAURIER—*cont.*

or to a contractor established in the enemy country who, as a matter of common knowledge, supplies articles of this kind to the enemy. The word "contractor" does not seem to be an apt translation of the word "commercant."

The PRESIDENT : It has been commented on several times.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : I think it would be just as well to say "merchant" or "trader."

The PRESIDENT : It is not an apt phrase.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : The next presumption arises : "If the goods which are consigned to a fortified place belonging to the enemy"—which is quite conceivable also—"or other place serving as a base for the armed forces of the enemy." The reviews and magazines in England have been full of comment upon the word "base." That is why I asked, is there a definition of the word "base" in the Declaration of London to be found? We understand exactly what "base" is; it is to be found in all the books; it has been declared by judicial authority, and there can be no doubt upon that. Therefore the Declaration of London goes so far in favour of the neutrality of neutral vessels. The food carries the presumption that it is for the enemy; it is only a presumption; it can be rebutted by evidence, even if it is consigned to the enemy authorities. You would imagine that if food is consigned to the enemy authority it is not only presumptive, but absolute proof.

The PRESIDENT : But it can be rebutted.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : Still, in such a case there is opportunity for rebuttal, and the party aggrieved can go to the court and say : "No; though this food was conveyed to the enemy authority, still it was not destined for war purposes."

I think the Declaration of London is humane in every respect, and, for my part, I think the duty of the Dominions is to stand by the Imperial authorities in this matter. I go further. Sir Edward Grey is negotiating at the present time a Treaty of Arbitration between Great Britain and the United States, and since we have been in England we have learnt with great joy that France is likely to go into that arbitration treaty also. No greater step, I think, has been taken for the higher civilisation of mankind than the negotiation of that treaty; and we all agree here, that if Sir Edward Grey is able to negotiate for, and have such a treaty enacted, it would be one of the greatest honours of his career and the greatest act of this century. If you prevent this agreement being passed, you put a bar and a stop at once on that treaty; and the reason is overwhelming, therefore, why the hands of the Government should be strengthened by this Conference, as far as it can, being in favour of the ratification of the Declaration of London.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I regard this matter as one of commanding importance, and so far as it is possible for a layman to master the situation, I have endeavoured to do so. I have discussed the legal points that may arise under the articles of the Declaration of London with my friend the Attorney-General of New Zealand. My colleague, Dr. Findlay, will state the conclusions that he has come to from the legal aspect, and although some of the points have already been touched upon, it would be a source of satisfaction to the country I am representing if Dr. Findlay's views upon the legal position were stated.

I have also discussed the articles of the Declaration of London with a great many people who take a deep interest in the matter—professional men, merchants, shipowners, and others—and I find there is considerable diversity of opinion among them on the subject. I recognise, too, that there has been, on